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The Hon. Barbara Boxer
Chairman
Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Jim Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boxer and Ranking Member Inhofe:

As your Committee prepares to begin work on a Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill, I would like to bring to your attention important water-related infrastructure issues I hope you can incorporate into your legislation. This important legislation authorizes various Army Corps of Engineers activities that will greatly impact my state.

The Army Corps of Engineers is responsible for flood protection, environmental restoration, waterway navigation and other important civil and military activities. Illinois is home to some of the largest waterway systems in the country and the infrastructure surrounding them is in dire need of investment. The American Society of Civil Engineers' annual report card gave the condition of Illinois' water infrastructure a near-failing grade of "D".

The next WRDA bill can help make a significant dent in our infrastructure deficit if we increase investments in waterways and watershed management. Our economic competitiveness depends on having a modern waterway transportation network and the infrastructure necessary to protect against flooding. Our future also depends on improving our watersheds and making sure we maintain the health of our environment for generations to come.

All of these goals will require increased resources to accomplish. I encourage you to include increased funding for Army Corps activities in this upcoming WRDA. In addition to increasing investments, I respectfully urge you to consider the following issues as your Committee considers a WRDA bill:

- **Asian Carp / Invasive Species**

Asian Carp and other invasive species pose a serious threat to the Great Lakes economy and ecosystem. The Army Corps of Engineers is currently engaged in several projects and studies to keep Carp and other invasive species from reaching the Great Lakes.

I encourage you to work with me to combat the spread of Asian Carp and contain the invasive species, and to keep it from entering Lake Michigan.

- **Local Control of Levee Projects / Section 408 Reform**

Communities in the Metro East Illinois region have been working to improve their levee system since it was decertified by FEMA in 2007. Local residents raised money to make repairs to the system and are working with engineers on ways to fortify the levees, but local leaders have faced

bureaucratic hurdles from the Army Corps of Engineers, specifically with regard to obtaining a Section 408 permit for the project.

I encourage you to include legislation to allow the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to streamline the process for communities making improvements to flood control infrastructure. Communities that are willing to raise the funds to make repairs should be able to work with the Army Corps to obtain necessary permits in a timely manner.

- **Upper Mississippi Locks and Dams and Restoration Efforts**

The Mississippi River is the backbone of our waterway transportation system, transporting \$12 billion worth of products each year, including over 1 billion bushels of grain to ports around the world. This efficient river transportation is key to Illinois' economy. But the system of locks and dams along the Upper Mississippi are in desperate need of modernization. The current system was built 70 years ago and updates are needed to fit the requirements of modern barge technology.

More than two years ago, the Inland Waterways User Board, in coordination with the Army Corp of Engineers, studied the long term funding issues in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund and submitted a unanimously approved proposal to the Corps. That proposal provides options for fully funding the needs of the waterway system and prioritizing projects so that they are completed in a timely and cost-efficient manner. While the proposal presents many good specific ideas and approaches, two clear broader points emerge from their study: 1) we need to establish long-term funding strategies to ensure projects, once started, are completed in a timely manner; and 2) users of the waterways system are ready and willing to contribute more into the inland waterways trust fund to build and maintain infrastructure if the federal government improves the way in which we fund inland waterways projects.

I encourage you to work with all stakeholders to find a way to expedite the construction and operation of these critical lock and dam projects.

- **Increased Harbor Maintenance Funding**

Our ports and harbors are in need of maintenance and repair and we are not fully utilizing the trust fund established to address these needs. I encourage you to include legislation that would increase funding for the operation and maintenance of harbors and ports without decreasing funding for other public works projects.

Thank you for the consideration of my views. I look forward to working with you to providing our country with a strong waterway transportation system that will keep us competitive in the 21st century economy.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
U.S. Senator